

Mound Plantation
Cannonsburg Vicinity
Jefferson County
Mississippi

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Mississippi

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office

MOUND PLANTATION (CHAMBERLAIN HOUSE)

N.s. Old Natchez Trace, Cannonsburg vicinity, Jefferson Co., Miss.

Physical Data

Present owner: U. S. Government.

Present occupant and use: Mr. Bill Chamberlain - residence.

Description (present condition)

Wall construction: Wood frame.

Size and form: 60' x 38'.

Number stories: One.

Porch: 10' wide across front.

Exterior openings, windows: Double hung in several varieties;
25-light at N. E. face; panelled shutters at porch.

Exterior openings: Front door, 8-panel with transom; some
6-panel, batten doors and French doors.

Cornice: None.

Roof: Gabled (originally broken slope); corrugated galvanized
iron (originally shingles).

Chimneys: Two, brick.

Interior

Floors: Wood plank, varies $4\frac{1}{4}$ " to $6\frac{1}{2}$ " wide.

Doors: 6-panel, 4-panel and batten.

Trim: Moulded, mitered.

Mantels: Wood, simple, early Georgian mouldings.

Stairways: None.

Plasterwork: Chimney breasts only are plastered, other walls
and the ceilings are wood.

Additions and alterations: The seven rooms were not all built
at one time, but over a period of years; roof lines were
changed in modern reroofing process; most windows have been
replaced.

Outbuildings: No old outbuildings remain.

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Historical Data

Year of erection: First portion about 1778-80.

Built for (first owner): William Ferguson.

Architect or designer: Unknown.

Built by: Unknown.

Original intended use: Tavern.

Notable events and occupants:

William Ferguson built a one-room tavern in 1778 or not later than 1780 on what is supposed to be an Indian mound and also the site of a Spanish fort with stockade and moat, near Uniontown, now extinct. A room at each end, then later three rooms across the back, were added after 1783, or some time around 1800. Other buildings on the plantation of 1830 or 40 which have disappeared included, (1) a kitchen, (2) guest house ("Sleepy Hollow"), a 2-story log or brick house with brick foundation, 4 rooms, double chimney, (3) slave quarters, (4) overseer's quarters, (5) brick walks, (6) the Stockade, (7) the Moat.

"It seems that William Ferguson, who may or may not have erected the oldest unit of the house, came to the Natchez District in 1776 or 1777, and settled very shortly thereafter on the Mound Plantation property. The grant of the Spanish Government to Ferguson to 500 arpents of land bears the date of March 15, 1789. The Spanish deed was confirmed by the United States Board of Commissioners in 1805.

"It is known that Ferguson married a Miss Polina Burch in 1783. In 1800 he was sheriff of Pickering County, and died during the same year. Shortly after his death, his widow married James Chamberlain. Mrs. Chamberlain lived until 1843. Her descendants continued to live on the property, until it was acquired by the State of Mississippi for the Park Service in 1937." **

References:

"Architectural Survey of the Chamberlain House or Mound Plantation," by Stuart M. Barnette, Ass't Architect, N.P.S., dated August 14, 1937." *

Mound Plantation (Chamberlain House)

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References: (Cont.)

"Preliminary Report - The Chamberlain House and Dependencies of the Mound Plantation Development," by Fred P. Parris, Ass't Architect, N.P.S., dated November 18, 1937.*

*Typed copy attached.

**From a letter to Chas. E. Peterson, October 7, 1940, from Dawson A. Phelps of the Natchez Trace Parkway Project.

Prepared by F. Ray Leinkuehler October 30, 1940.

F. Ray Leinkuehler,
Architect in Charge, Central Unit,
Historic American Buildings Survey.

Approved: Emmitt Hule Date Nov. 29, 1940
District Officer

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON

August 14, 1937

Memorandum for Mr. Spalding
Mr. Vint:

Subject: Architectural Survey of the Chamberlain
House or Mound Plantation.

Considered from strictly a national viewpoint, the Chamberlain House or Mound Plantation, as an example of early American architecture, is relatively unimportant. It assumes a more important aspect, however, when its local importance is designated as one of its limiting standards of evaluation.

The present rambling one-story frame structure known as the Chamberlain House comprises some nine rooms in various stages of disrepair. By means of the remaining architectural evidences it is possible to trace the development of the building from the original late eighteenth century, one room plans to the present disorderly dispositions of living accommodations. Three distinct steps are discernable in this development; these will receive the temporary arbitrary assignment as post-revolutionary, 1777-1800, early republic, 1800-1830, and ante-bellum, 1830-1860. Due chiefly to the economic status of its occupants, few changes have been made in an effort to "modernize" the house.

The oldest part of the structure comprises the present living room and the attic above. Concrete evidences of this fact may be found in the framing in both the attic and foundations. In plan this unit measures approximately 16 feet by 20 feet. Today, of the old part of the house, the champhered ceiling beams, two pair of six-light window sash with part of the original frames, the front door, now incorporated in another part of the house, the exterior shutters, framing, clapboards on northwest wall, some flooring, and the greater part of the chimney remain and are original. An early mantel which may have been the first to be incorporated in this room now frames the fireplace in the north bedroom. This now employs some mouldings, which are not contemporary with the earliest interior trim found in the house, but at the same time the general spirit and character of this mantel as a whole would lead one to feel that these mouldings may have been added later or replaced other earlier ones.

The exterior shutters deserve some special consideration for their unusual characteristics. First of all they have four almost equally sized solid panels and are in one section, that is; instead of having two leaves, each of which would be hung from the jambs as is the general custom, the shutter is like a miniature door and was hung from one jamb on "R" hinges and secured at the opposite side with a single wrought iron hook. The stiles and rails on the hinged face are beaded and the panels are plain faced and sunken. On the opposite side the panel which started below the face of the unmolded stiles and rails rises by means of a broad splay to project beyond the face of these framing members. There is no fillet at the meeting of the splay and the panel face. All of these features are in a fair state of preservation.

The disposition of the original openings in the three sides, northeast, southeast, and southwest now enclosed by additions made subsequent to erection of original unit, can be determined only by removing their respective finish to permit an examination of the framing in such walls. The doors, frames, and trim now appearing in these walls belong to the late ante-bellum period. It is probable, however, that the window now in the northeast end once occupied the position now usurped by the large southwest bedroom door and that a small single door stood where the north leaf of the double door to the rear hall now stands. The fireplace mantel incorporated in this room is also ante-bellum. As has previously been stated, it is believed that the mantel in use in the north bedroom may have been the original piece. This could be repaired and reset in its original position. The original front door employed between the two bedrooms on the southwest end of the house could also be relocated to resume the service for which it was originally intended.

The stumps of what are believed to have been ceiling joists appear on the exterior of the southwest wall and are interpreted as evidence that a front porch once extended across these three bays of the original building. Archeological excavations at this point may reveal the foundations of such a porch and when it is possible to examine the roof framing without its covering it is likely the front plate may disclose some evidence to substantiate this opinion.

The matched siding on this same elevation was probably put on in the eighteen thirties and was in all likelihood superseded by beaded weather boarding like that to be found on the southwest wall of the rear stair hall. Such boarding also must have appeared on the two ends.

An offset appears high up inside the chimney stack and is interpreted as evidence of retopping which probably occurred at the time the northeast front bedroom wing was added. Time and the elements have not dealt lightly with the chimneys of these early

and in most cases of such early structures retopping has been necessary.

A more obvious innovation is the corrugated iron roof which supplanted the original covering of wood shingles or shakes.

The only piece of original hardware to be found about the house are the two wrought iron hooks on the original front shutters and a single shutter catch on the wall back of one of these. The action of this catch is the essence of simplicity depending on the pressure of a thin rectangular strip of iron supported by a slender post to hold the shutter against the wall. The catch is located halfway up the side of the shutter. Such hardware throughout this section was more commonly located beneath the bottom rail of the shutter. No attempt to make a decorative feature of this piece has been made. The "H" type hinges, traces of which still remain on the shutters, the "H" hinges which must have hung the doors, the locks, the latches, and bolts and keepers as well as fireplace hardware would all have to be replaced.

The second stage in the development of the house was the addition of the northeast front bedroom. This probably took place during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. A more specific approximation of the date would be 1816. The architectural evidences which bear out this assumption are to be found in the presence of the paneled dado, chair rail, base, window details, and the eight panel front door with transom and frame. The mantel piece in this room belongs, as does its counterpart in the living room, to the later ante-bellum period. The closet between the chimney breast and the front wall is also a later piece but probably antedates the mantel piece by fifteen or twenty years.

Of special interest is the original paint to be found on the dado, chair rail, and base within this cupboard. A very successful relationship of shades of tan has been obtained here. This information would contribute materially to the success of any attempted restoration. The twenty-five light sash in the end of the room is also a unique feature and becomes especially so in this section where are so few houses of this period.

It is realized that the assignment of this unit to the second stage of development is contrary to the accounts of local history and tradition but this report takes into account only architectural evidences. Such evidences support in every instance this opinion.

As a result of at least two stages of construction that section of the house used as the front bedroom on the southwest end offers little enlightening information on the date of its original erection. The first of these additions is said to have included a chimney at the southwest end flanked by closets. Later

the chimney was taken down and the room lengthened. Leading from this end was said to have been a brick porch and steps. Only an outcropping pile of crumbling bricks today marks the site of this feature. It is probable, however, that archeological excavations at this end would determine the size and location of this porch as well as that of the earlier chimney. All the doors, sash, shutters, and trim now incorporated in this end of the building are of ante-bellum character.

It is probable that the disposition of the architectural features of the front facade of this addition was very similar to that of the wing at the opposite end of the present structure; that is, a door and window opening on the long gallery.

This verbal restoration, while purely conjectural, finds ample precedent among numerous houses of the same type in this section of the country.

The framing of the lean-to indicates that this addition in its entirety was made at one time. The presence of early nineteenth century paneling under the windows in the bedroom at the southwest end is rather disturbing however. It was finally decided that this paneling was removed from some other part of the house, probably from under the original windows in the adjoining front bedroom at the time of the second remodeling of that section. The presence of the early mantel piece in the bedroom at the opposite end has been accounted for earlier in the report.

With the exception of the rambling rear ell, the enlargement of the opening between the rear hall and the living room is probably the latest constructional innovation. This change could not have been made many years prior to the War Between the States.

(SGD) STUART M. BARNETTE,
Assistant Architect.

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

November 18, 1937.

Preliminary Report

The Chamberlain House and Dependencies
of
The Mound Plantation Development
Jefferson County, Mississippi

By

Fred P. Parris
Assistant Architect
Branch of Plans and Design

The Chamberlain House and Dependencies

or

The Mound Plantation Development

Jefferson County, Mississippi

The Chamberlain house lies in Jefferson County, Mississippi, about seventeen miles northeast of Natchez, very near an early settlement called Uniontown which has now entirely disappeared. The house is situated on high ground about two hundred yards northwest of the old Trace with an avenue of trees leading from the Trace up to the front porch. It will also be visible from the Parkway. Uniontown was located on the southeast side of the Trace opposite the Chamberlain house. The residence has been previously known as Ferguson's Tavern, Mound Plantation, and the Chamberlain House.

The structure, and property acquired by William Ferguson in the Spanish District of Natchez about 1775, has been the homestead of various descendants of the family from that time up to 1937 when the State of Mississippi bought the house and part of the property for the National Park Service.

The Tavern was erected on high ground traditionally believed to be an Indian mound and also the site of a Spanish fortified outpost. At the time William Ferguson built the original one-room tavern, about 1778, the stockade was standing, and a moat is reported to have existed at the base of the mound to which the settlers of Uniontown fled in the event of an Indian attack.

The original building was only a single room 16' x 20' which, with fireplace, was probably used as a tavern for traders and wayfarers traveling along the Natchez Trace. No doubt there were numerous outbuildings, including a kitchen, smoke house, barns, and later on slave quarters, as well as other outbuildings necessary in the operation of a sizable plantation on the grant of land which Ferguson had secured.

To the central room was added an additional room on either end, after which the three back rooms were probably added. It is likely that the additions were not begun until after Ferguson's marriage in 1783 and that later additions may have been made due to increasing travel along the Natchez Trace.

To date, according to the architectural evidence now existing, the center room, or original house, will bear out a date of approximately 1780 with the first addition somewhere around 1800.

In the writer's opinion the Chamberlain house, solely as an outstanding example of architecture of the period, would not justify its restoration by the Service; However, if the historical evidence of its connection with the Natchez Trace and the social and economic history of the old Southwest are considered sufficiently important by the Historical Division, there are now existing details of construction and information sufficient for its restoration as of 1830 or 1840.

In the event that a restoration is considered, a survey should be made in the form of an archaeological investigation to locate, if possible, the outbuildings described by the Chamberlain family. The following structures are reported to have been grouped around the main house:

1. The Kitchen

Back of and a few feet to the left of the house - a single room structure with a chimney.

2. The Guest House or "Sleepy Hollow"

Directly back of the main house - a two-story house, four rooms, double chimney, built of logs or brick with brick foundation.

3. The Slave Quarters

Twelve to sixteen cabins in the bottom north and east of the main house. Single room cabins - built of logs, each probably having a chimney.

4. The Overseer's Quarters

To the right of and approximately on line with the front of the guest house, probably about midway between the guest house and slave quarters group - a two-room house, double chimney, built of logs probably with a brick foundation.

5. The Brick Walks

Said to be existing around the main house and are now covered with earth. In all probability the brick walks connected the main house with the kitchen and guest house.

6. The Stockade

Surrounding the main structure at the foot of the mound.

7. The Moat

On the outer side of the stockade.

Archaeological investigation should also verify or disprove the belief that the mound on which the house now stands is an Indian mound artificially made. In the course of such an investigation some indications might be found as to the exact location of the Spanish fort which is said to have occupied the present house site.

Of the features and structures said to have existed at some time during the different stages of habitation, slight visible evidences, other than the existing house, remain to indicate such an extensive development as has been described. At the southwest end of the house a small deposit of broken bricks is the only indication of what may have been the chimney, said to have been in Mrs. Ferguson's room. Back of, and to the left of this brick deposit, or farther southwest are scattered broken bricks which might be the site of the old kitchen (all indications and probable locations will be shown on a topographical map to be prepared by the Bureau of Public Road Engineers on the Parkway project).

At the site indicated for the guest house ("Sleepy Hollow"), said to have been a two story log or brick house with two rooms on each of the two floors, with a double fireplace and central chimney, only a few scattered broken bricks are visible. These scattered pieces of broken bricks have little or no significance as yet, but the site should be investigated. Besides the present topography is suggestive of once having been a building site.

The spot pointed out as having been occupied by the overseer's quarters and the adjoining part of the bottom land where the slave quarters were located now bear no surface evidences whatever of once existing buildings, except that the ground is suitable and conveniently located in relation to the plantation house.

One can only speculate as to the location of the stockade and moat since neither was used after attacks by the Indians were no longer feared. However, if they were once existing, traces could probably be found at the base of the mound.

If the outbuildings were built as described, it would be a fairly simple task to locate the kitchen, "Sleepy Hollow," the overseer's

quarters, the moat, the stockade, and brick walks by digging several narrow trenches to a depth of two or three feet.

On the building sites such trenching should reveal either the remains of the brick chimney and wall foundations or show soil disturbances where they were removed. Mrs. Chamberlain remembers that the bricks from these structures were removed to provide material for more modern structures elsewhere on the property. A series of trenches, (2' or 3' wide) excavated to the undisturbed clay line, dug into the mound at the base, should reveal the profile of the once excavated moat and the filled-in post holes which once held the vertical posts of the stockade.

It is doubtful whether or not any traces of the slave quarters could be found unless the cabin foundations were set in the ground 12" to 18" or unless part or all of them had chimneys. To find indications (filled-in pier or post holes) of the foundation logs or piers, the disturbed top soil would have to be removed in very thin layers until undisturbed soil is reached.

If a restoration of the Chamberlain house and plantation group is justifiable as a historic development in connection with the Natchez Trace, the group when finished to have a definite utility value, such as providing overnight accommodations for visitors, then the following recommendations are made:

1. That an archaeological survey or investigation be made to determine the exact location of as many of the outbuildings as possible and to verify as well as determine the existence and extent of the moat and stockade. At the same time narrow trenches should be dug into the face of the mound to determine whether or not it is an artificial Indian mound or a natural formation.

It is recommended that all this investigation be done with CCC labor under the direction of a technician versed in archaeological methods and practices.

2. If archaeological investigation verifies or reveals the location and sizes of the buildings and features of the plantation, it is recommended that an architectural study be made of other contemporary plantation groups now existing, as well as any buildings of the type that may have been recorded.
3. That a complete set of plans and specifications be prepared for the restoration of the Chamberlain house and reproduction of the ~~outbuildings~~ outbuildings as of 1830 or 1940. Sufficient modern conveniences should be included to make the buildings adaptable to modern day usage.

Addendum to:
Mound Plantation
(Mount Locust)
(Chamberlain House)
(Natchez Trace National Parkway)
Natchez Trace National Parkway
Cannonsburg vicinity
Jefferson County
Mississippi

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Route 4, Box 166
Natchez Trace National Parkway
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PHOTOGRAPHS